

Enclosure A

SEAT PLEASANT CONCERNED CITIZENS COMMITTEE
P.O. Box# 4489, Capitol Heights, MD 20791-4489
John L. Walker, Sr., Spokesperson
Phone: 3-1-922-5750



July 15, 2020

The Honorable Aisha N. Braveboy
State's Attorney
Office of State's Attorney
Courthouse, Room 3403M
14735 Main St.
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Dear State's Attorney Braveboy:

We, as concerned citizens of the City of Seat Pleasant Maryland, are troubled about some activities taking, or having taken place within the city government. Our concerns are that as a result of inappropriate activities of the Seat Pleasant government officials, the Seat Pleasant residents may not receive some of the required services. It is time for someone to look into the perceived abuse of power and unnecessary spending by the city government

The increasing lack of accountability and impartiality in recent fiscal year's (FY) combined with financial instability, high employee turnover, conflicts of interest and other perceived improprieties, in addition to violating their oath of office when they stated that "I will to the best of my skill and judgement, diligently and faithfully, without partiality or prejudice, execute the position of . . . for the City of Seat Pleasant according to the Constitution and Laws of the City and State." These perceived violations have resulted in a complete lack of confidence in Mayor Eugene Grant and other city officials.

One can readily see that because of mismanagement, city officials do not have office space within the boundaries of the city and there has been no public notice to the residents of the current location of the office of the mayor and City Council. Accordingly, the citizens do not know where to go to take care of official city business. Likewise, trash and refuse collection interruptions have occurred resulting from city mismanagement. The personal property tax rate is extremely high, the highest in the state, and it is detrimental to the welfare of the citizens of Seat Pleasant. This should be investigated as to why it is so high and what is happening to the funds that are received from it. Inappropriate travel expenses have helped contribute to what appears to be mismanagement of the financial affairs of the city. These are but a few of the things that have happened in the city resulting in the loss of businesses and the potential loss of businesses to the detriment of the residents of Seat Pleasant.

A hostile work environment has resulted in a devastating employee turnover which illustrates that the city residents are not receiving the expected services required. This type of mismanagement mirrors the modus operandi of our nation's leadership. Attached for your

State's Attorney Braveboy letter
Dated, July 15, 2020
Page 2 of 2

information is a Concern Citizens Report that reflects a limited scrutiny of the concerns of our committee. We need your help in seeking resolution to our concerns. It is our hope and prayer that you will look into the identified areas within your jurisdiction or forward them to the appropriate offices for the necessary action needed to address our concerns.

We are quickly approaching a new election in the City of Seat Pleasant. The people are not aware of what is currently going on. If something is not done soon, the same mismanagement machine will be re-elected into office and continue the mismanagement and possibly insolvency of the city. We are at a point of seeking relief and possible guidance in resolving our dilemma. We appeal to you and request that you investigate the perceived mismanagement and fraudulent activities that reside among the officials of the City of Seat Pleasant. Thank you for your assistance and service.

Very truly yours

<24-, c:

.....L. Walker, Sr. /-

Spokesperson for
Concerned Citizen Committee
of Seat Pleasant, Maryland

Enclosure

Concerned Citizens:

Amanda Feggans
Aretha Stephenson
Barbara Kennedy
Carla Hart
Charles Ruffin
Darlinda Sanders
Donald Thomas
Dorothy Taylor
Gigi Riley
Hugh Stevens
Julian Riley
Keith Feggans
Marian Walker
Marla Bruce
Michael Stephenson
Shirley Bruce
Victor Taylor

Enclosure 1

CITIZENS OF SEAT PLEASANT, MARYLAND CONCERNS ON WASTE AND MISMANAGEMENT July 2020

We, as concerned citizens of the City of Seat Pleasant Maryland, are troubled about some activities taking, or have taken place within the city government. Our concerns are that the Seat Pleasant residents may not receive some of the required services resulting from inappropriate activities of the Seat Pleasant government officials.

Seat Pleasant is an incorporated city in Prince Georges County, Maryland providing services to nearly 5,000 residents. In doing so, the elected mayor, city council and appointed staff are stewards of public funds and have inherent fiduciary responsibilities for the expenditure of these funds. However, the increasing lack of accountability and impartiality in recent fiscal year's (FY) combined with financial instability, high employee turnover, conflicts of interest and other perceived improprieties, in addition to violating their oath of office when they stated that

I, (insert name of official), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution Of the United States; and that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the State of Maryland and support the Constitution and Laws thereof, and that I will to the best of my skill and judgement, diligently and faithfully, without partiality or prejudice, execute the position of (insert position) for the City of Seat Pleasant according to the Constitution and Laws of the City and State.

This perceived violation has resulted in a complete lack of confidence in Mayor Eugene Grant and other city officials.

Our concerns are justified by a limited scrutiny of documents from which we were able to uncover relevant information. A lot of the taxpayer's funds are used to satisfy the ego of the mayor who splurges at the tax-payers expense under the self-made umbrella of at first, "The City of Excellence," now "The Smart City," e.g. using high technology through the "internet of things" to monitor and track data to manage resources and assets. This report highlights the Citizens of Seat Pleasant, Maryland concerns on waste and mismanagement.

I. Mismanagement of City Administration

1. Emergency Funding

The Seat Pleasant Mayor and Council held a special council session on Monday, July 8, 2019 to discuss approving emergency funding in the form of a loan for half a million dollars (\$500,000) at 4.5% interest. According to the approved council meeting minutes, Mayor Grant stated that the loan was intended to cover cash flow shortages from July [2019] through October [2019] even though the overall cash deficit was \$1,500,000. Although Mayor Grant attributed the shortage to decreasing red-light and speed camera revenues, it is believed the cash shortage

directly resulted from gross overspending, inept management of city funds and use of inflated revenue estimates. It is correct that the City as most small municipalities experience a deficit during the final quarter of the fiscal year. However, the deficit also occurred due to cost overruns associated with the construction/renovation of City Hall and the EJD facilities many of which were beyond the city's control due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This includes delays in the receipt of construction materials, construction crews that were quarantined for two weeks after contracting the virus; and increase in costs of constructions materials to name a few. Additionally, when Mayor Grant changed the budget from a line-item to a "budgeting for outcomes" format, the city's budget appears to have become convoluted and maynot provide managers with clear and concise financial information. It also appears Mayor Grantwas incorrect when he said the cash deficit was also due to the fiscal year starting on July 1st which he later said needed to be moved to October 1st to coincide with revenue flows. Again, the cash flow problems in all likelihood stemmed from overspending, mismanagement and the use of inflated revenue estimates and not from the fiscal year start date or some other irrelevant factor. The mayor was cautioned by the city manager and former fiscal advisor that the budget revenue estimates where higher than actual.

2. Trash Pickup

In response to trash not being picked up, Mayor Grant instructed that door flyers be placed on the doors of select residents explaining why the residential trash pick did not occur on Monday, June 15th which was the scheduled day. He mis-lead residents by stating in the flyer that the vendor's services were substandard and marked by complaints and because of that they would be "evaluating" the city's relationship with the sanitation vendor. However, after receiving a copy of the Mayor's notice to the residents, the vendor politely informed residents in writing on the vendors letter head that the real reason for not picking up the trash was that Seat Pleasant had not paid its trash bill in more than six (6) months. Because the monthly sanitation bills were more than 6 months behind, confirms the city clearly failed to utilize even the very basic capabilities of the expensive NetSuite and SquareWorks computer systems intended to reduce time and cost in processing invoice payments despite Mayor Grant's boisterous attempts at rebranding the city as a "smart technology city." While the city acknowledges it was in arrears in payments, the vendor failed to submit monthly invoices and the finance team hired in June 2020 were unaware of the monthly installments due to the vendor. Furthermore, even after the vendor sent multiple written notices requesting payment of past due amounts be received no later than 10⁰⁰ a.m. on June 15th, a check paying the balance was not delivered until after 1pm on the day of the deadline making it impossible for the vendor to perform the trash pickup for that day. The vendor went on to say that although the Mayor's notice said that it would be "evaluating" its relationship with the vendor, the city had already issued a notice on June 2, 2020 informing the vendor that it was terminating the contract at the end of the month and would be handling its owntrash pickup. It appears that Mayor Eugene Grant was deceptive in communications with both the residents and the vendor in a dishonest attempt to minimize his accountability over the

nonpayment of the more than 6 months past due sanitation bill.

3. Rental of Temporary Buildings City Hall Relocation

The City Hall building has been under renovation since 2018. The City rented temporary mobile buildings to use as office space. Because of apparent failure to pay the rental fee, the city officials had to move out of the temporary building and are now renting office space well outside of the city limits, and the citizens have not been notified of this relocation.

This statement is inaccurate. The city relinquished rental of the temporary trailers due to cost at the recommendation of the city manager and financial advisor. The trailers were rented at a cost of \$48,000 per month while the rental space outside the city as significantly less at \$8,000 per month. Management was not necessarily in agreement with locating outside the city limits, but the lease price was considerably less than was was previously expended towards the trailers.

Formatted: Left

4. **FY 2019 Speed and Red-Light Cameras**

After examining documents obtained through the Maryland's Public Information Act, examples of potentially gross mismanagement were identified under Mayor Eugene Grant's administration, e.g. FY 2019 the speed camera general ledger cash account showed that significantly more speed camera funds were spent than deposited. A sum of \$1,049,425 was collected in deposits while the expenditures or credits against the account totaled \$1,126,928 that resulted in a decrease of \$77,503 to the ending balance.

Likewise, a review of the red-light camera general ledger cash account revealed that deposits were also far exceeded by expenditures or credits. The deposits were to \$835,216 while expenditures or credits totaled \$1,410,612 resulting in the enormous decrease of **\$575,396** to ending balance. This also means that for every \$1.00 of red-light camera funds deposited, the mayor and his administration overspent by \$1.69. The over expenditures in the cash accounts for both speed and red-light cameras will result in less operating cash available for the upcoming fiscal year for each account. A summary of the decreases in year ending balances is shown in Table 1 below. The FY 2019 Audit reflects a total of \$2,017,142 in traffic camera fines. Management is not sure whether the chart below reflects actual receipts of actual deposits minus the fees charged by the vendor, or whether the deposits reflect all camera funds owe to the city at June 30, 2020. The City of Seat Pleasant like most municipal governments, operate on an accrual basis, which means at the end of the fiscal year, there is money owed from various sources. There is a 60-day window in which any funds owed for the previous fiscal year are credited toward that year if the funds are received within 60 days or September 30 of the subsequent fiscal year.

FY19 Speed Camera		FY19 Red-Light Camera	
	\$		\$
Deposits/Debits	1,049,425	Deposits/Debits	835,216
Expenditures/Credits	1,126,928	Expenditures/Credits	1,410,612
Decrease to End Bal	<u>(77,503)</u>	Decrease to End Bal	<u>(575,396)</u>

Table 1. Speed and Red-light cameras

5. **FY 2019 Investment Reserves Balance**

Serious concerns arose after examining other accounts critical to Seat Pleasant's financial stability. Specifically, the overall total investment reserves general ledger balance showed an unfavorable decrease of **\$989,103** in FY 2019. (See Table 2) The ledger contained credit journal entries in four separate months that moved massive amounts of investment funds out of the investment account into other areas that could not clearly be identified without additional information provided from Seat Pleasant regarding the intended purposes for moving these funds. Investment reserves are meant to be a "rainy day fund" to ensure basic city operations continue in the event of a large-scale emergency. Furthermore, going back as far as 2009, no adjustments have ever been made that reduced the investment reserve balances to such

dangerously low levels until now under Mayor Eugene Grant. Mayor Grant and the city officials who approved moving or decreasing the investment reserves should be held accountable in the event there are issues with the oversight or expenditures of these funds.

Amounts Moved or Decreased from FY19 Investment Reserves Balance		
1	August 2018	(\$600,000)
2	September 2018	(\$59,782)
3	May 2019	(\$199,068)
4	June 2019	(\$199,079)
5	Other adjustments	\$68,826
Total Decrease in Investment Reserve		(\$989,103)

Table 2. More information is needed to determine the purpose for moving or decreasing the investment reserve balance.

The only amount appropriated by the City Council which is required before any funds can be transferred to the general operating account is the \$600,000 which was transferred to Merrill Lynch for the SPICE, LLC which was approved by the council. The other amounts listed above were not transferred with the appropriate approval authority and was done either by the treasurer or at the direction of the mayor to so,so.

6. **Budget Ordinances**

Additionally, a check of the approved budget ordinances for fiscal years 2018, 2019 and 2020 revealed more concerns regarding some of the approved revenue amounts. First, in FY18 a revitalization tax was instituted and levied against certain business in Seat Pleasant. However, the tax was later challenged in court by some business because it was not fairly charged to all business within the established “special tax zone.” The court ruled against the city. The failed revitalization tax has not been included as a revenue source in later budget ordinances. The ordinances also showed dramatic jumps in business personal property tax budget estimates for ~~FY18, FY19 and FY20 that appeared inflated compared to prior years from FY12 – FY17 where~~ the average personal property budget estimate was about \$1,080,765. This is also an incorrect statement that has repeatedly been stated by the business owner. The court did not rule against the city which did nothing illegal or unethical. The case was dismissed because the city missed one step in its internal process of notifying the property owners in advance of the tax levy which the previous treasurer was directed to do but failed to do. The same property owner is in arrears of payment to the city for personal property taxes. A current re-payment plan has been established with the owner and agreed to by the city.

7. **Business Personal Property Tax Rates**

Another questionable budget concern is the business personal property tax rate of \$15 per \$100 of assessment which seems excessive and may have discouraged new businesses from relocating to Seat Pleasant. This has forced some existing business to move out of the city. This is another inaccurate statement. The personal property tax rate on the business personal property taxes does not impact the residents of Seat Pleasant. During the pandemic, we had one business that closed, but gained four new businesses in seat pleasant. The city’s financial condition is stable based upon the approved FY2019 Audit report.

a. A search through the Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation database for personal property tax rates confirmed that Seat Pleasant has the highest business personal property tax rate in the State of Maryland. Excluding Seat Pleasant, rates for the entire state ranged from \$0 to \$2.65 with the city’s personal property tax rate being more than five times higher than the maximum range for the entire state. See the Table 3 below for a sample of municipal business personal property tax rates. This rate was established years ago at the recommendation of the former treasurer and approved by the council. There has been no indication that this rate has deterred businesses from bringing their business to the city, in fact, four (4) businesses have

| recently located in the city, one of which was during the pandemic.

THIS SPACE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Comparison of FY20 Municipal Business Personal Property Tax Rates		
County	Municipality	Tax Rate Per \$100
Prince Georges	Seat Pleasant	\$15.00
	New Carrollton	\$1.66
	Greenbelt	\$1.73
	Bladensburg	\$2.09
	Capital Heights	\$2.50
	District Heights	\$1.50
	Forest Heights	\$1.75
	Glenarden	\$0.83
	Laurel	\$1.69
	Morningside	\$2.00
Allegany	Cumberland	\$2.65
Charles	Indian Head	\$0.80
Wicomico	Salisbury	\$2.40
Anne Arundel	Annapolis	\$1.94

Table 3. Information obtained from the Maryland Department of Taxation and Assessments

b. According to an article published in the *Xpose Seat Pleasant Newsletter*, a watchdog against local government waste and abuse, the extremely high business personal property tax rate of \$15 per \$100 of assessment which forced some business to close, have left residents without some essential services. Safeway, which was the city's largest grocery store, was the first to succumb to the excessive taxes. A few years later, Advance Auto also closed. However, business that remain open such as CVS Pharmacy and Planet Fitness are now considering whether they can stay open in Seat Pleasant with the \$15 per \$100 of assessment personal property tax rate. According to *Xpose Seat Pleasant*, CVS's was billed roughly \$285,000 in taxes for a year, and Planet Fitness was billed about \$122,000. These are significantly large tax bills for any business. Furthermore, because personal property taxes are based upon all tangible personal property that is owned, leased or used by business including, but not limited to, office and plant furniture, machinery, equipment, tools, furnishings, trade fixtures, inventory, and all other property not considered part of the real estate, the \$15 per \$100 of assessment rate is excessively high and forces some business to consider locations outside the City of Seat Pleasant.

Businesses are billed base upon their assessed value that they report to the State Department of Assessment and Taxation. The city has not control over what businesses report as their inventory. While the businesses personal property tax is high, it is not illegal. In fact, research of an attorney general opinion and state law, agrees that municipal corporations can levy taxes against personal property separately and at a different rate of the rate set for real property taxes.

8. Luxury Hotel Cost

Travel expenditure receipts for Mayor Grant and his associates were examined from FYs 2018 and 2019. Major problems such as inadequate documentation and government waste was discovered. Some hotel receipts were difficult to determine who actual stayed in the luxury

rooms and executive style suites due to inadequate documentation. An example where it was unclear who stayed in a lavishly-styled room cost taxpayers \$1,317.90 for a brief visit at the JW Marriot in Washington, DC from October 3 - 5, 2017, even though the hotel was less than 30 minutes from the Seat Pleasant City Hall or the traveler's residence. The receipts that were identifiable sometimes showed wasteful spending. For example, Mayor Grant spent \$2,583 of city funds for two extravagant rooms for two nights for himself and another person in the

Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC on February 6 – 8, 2018, even though this hotel was also less than 30 minutes from the Seat Pleasant City Hall or from his residence.

Some elected officials rented extravagant 3- or 4-bedroom condominiums for themselves and allowed family and friends to stay in the rooms at the city's expense while the officials attended the Maryland Municipal League Conference held in Ocean City, Maryland instead of renting a less expensive single hotel room or pay the difference in price. This was a waste of taxpayers' money.

It also appears that some travel related charges may have been paid using a personal credit card and then later reimbursed to that cardholder. In a previous audit report by Lindsey & Associates, the practice of reimbursements to high level city officials was identified and cited because some of the charges violated travel policies. All travel receipts for Mayor Grant and others require a thorough review using established procedures and policies to ensure accountability to the taxpayers. The audit report about high level city officials not adhering the city's travel policy was regarding the Mayor. Management staff were not in violation of the city travel policy. The costs of some council who stayed at condominiums for 5-7 days often was less than the cost of hotel stays of other staff for 3-4 nights.

9. Costs of Air Travel

Additionally, it does not appear that Mayor Grant obtained the cheapest airline flights by comparing prices from all airlines. Instead, most flights were booked to one carrier and did not appear to be coach-class tickets for all flights. Of the 43 travel-related transactions investigated, (Why so many for such a small city?), four were flights booked on the same day of travel which resulted in higher ticket prices; and 14 were flights reserved with less than two weeks prior to travel that also may have resulted in higher ticket prices. The most expensive flight cost \$14,093 for a trip to China. (See Table 4). Regardless of the destination, no first class or business class tickets should be purchased by Mayor Grant or any city official unless 1) no coach seats are available; or 2) a declared medical disability exist. Also, there is no accountability of frequent mileage points which rightly belong to the city.

Sample of Airline Ticket Cost for Mayor Eugene Grant			
#	Flight Designation	Travel Dates	Ticket Cost
1	China	09/04/18 – 09/10/18	\$14,093.01
2	Los Angeles, CA	11/03/18 – 11/11/18	\$1,912.95
3	Montreal, QC (Canada)	03/24/19 – 03/30/19	\$2,897.18
4	Atlanta, GA	04/23/19 – 04/27/19	\$1,415.40
5	Kansas City, MO	05/19/19 – 05/26/19	\$1,947.80

Table 4. Airline ticket costs.

10. Luxury Limousine & Vehicle Services

After landing at the airports, It appears that Mayor Grant often splurged on himself by renting chauffeured-luxury limousines on at least 17 different occasions using city funds instead of hailing a cab or catching an Uber. Table 5 reflects excerpts of chauffeured-luxury limousines receipts used by Mayor Grant. When Uber was used, many of the receipts did not list pickup nor drop-off locations for the mayor and another individual. Records also showed two luxury vehicles that included a Chevy 300 All-Wheel Sedan were rented using city funds instead of obtaining an economy priced rental vehicle. Finally, it seems appropriate that the cost for all luxury limousine rides and luxury vehicle rentals be refunded to Seat Pleasant's general fund by Mayor Eugene Grant and the renter of the luxury vehicles.

Sample of Chauffeured Limousines Services				
#	Passenger	City & State	Date	Amount
1	Eugene Grant	Orlando, FL	4/23/19	\$148.08
2	Eugene Grant	Orlando, FL	4/25/19	\$163.30
3	Eugene Grant	Houston, TX	4/25/19	\$120.38
4	Eugene Grant	Houston, TX	4/29/19	\$120.38
5	Eugene Grant	San Jose, CA	5/12/19	\$99.95
6	Eugene Grant	San Jose, CA	5/13/19	\$96.95
7	Eugene Grant	Arlington, VA	5/14/19	\$148.08
8	Eugene Grant	Kansas City, MO	5/19/19	\$107.88
9	Eugene Grant	Kansas City, MO	5/23/19	\$122.88
10	Eugene Grant	Fort Lauderdale, FL	1/30/19	\$106.80

Table 5. The cost for all chauffeured limousine services should be refunded to Seat Pleasant by Mayor Eugene Grant.

The council took action about the high costs of travel by reducing in the FY 2022 budget an allocation of a total of \$5,000 for travel for the Office of the Mayor.

II. Bid Waivers

A review of nine resolutions passed by the Seat Pleasant council found that \$1,004,585 in contracts was waived from the bid process in favor of sole source contracts. Except for two of the bids, bid waivers from 2016 through 2018 were examined from Grant's time as Mayor. These bid waivers were for ordinary services such as a staff retreat, staff appreciation day, construction management, architectural rendering and other easily obtainable marketplace services that should have gone through the competitive bidding process. Amounts ranged from \$8,950 to \$670,000. However, because Seat Pleasant's tax base is mostly retired or working class, the bidding process is even more important to guarantee the lowest or best offer is obtained. Furthermore, the use of bid waivers does not ensure that procurement activities will be sufficiently planned nor prevent personal, business or family relationships from existing between vendors and city representatives that unfairly ward contracts.

We have reason to believe that city officials inappropriately used bid waivers from 2012 through 2018 to frequently skip the bid process so that city officials could hand-select certain vendors by falsely stating in the waiver legislation that the "health and welfare" of the

community is threaten if the necessary time were taken to complete the bid process. This was nothing more that favoritism in violation of the establish rules. This is another inaccurate statement. Bid Waivers were reviewed by the City Attorney and the City's Bond Counsel to ensure that he bid waivers were in accordance and adherence to the provisions in the City Charter and State law.

III. Wasteful Spending

1. Another economic downfall occurred when the city purchase a customized cloud-based accounting system costing more than \$70,000, plus an additional estimated \$30,000 for licenses and related fees instead of leasing a prepackaged software like Peachtree or QuickBooks for a fraction of the cost.

2. The City Administrator, whose work and duties are mostly spent in the City Hall, except for occasional travel outside of the city for a meeting or conference, was given a city-purchased vehicle for her use when it is much cheaper and more economical to reimburse the Administrator for use of her personal vehicle. This seems to be nothing but a special "Perk" at the taxpayers' expense. Reimbursement for travel of one's personal vehicle for gas and mileage is not considered a "Perk" but a requirement. The city actually saved money because the personal vehicle owned by the city manager requires premium gas which is significantly higher (double and triple in most instances) than the county fuel for city issued vehicles. City vehicles are the only vehicles that can use fuel at the county gas stations. Additionally, when using a city vehicle to attend out of state conferences only per diem for meals is allowed and there are no costs expended for the per mile federal rate because the county fuel is used. The only maintenance of the vehicle during the time the vehicle was in use was for an oil change during a e year period. The city manager traveled 9 miles each way to and fro work. Check the status of similar cities, as most city managers have use of a city issued vehicle. Additionally, the city manager issued a mandate that vehicles can no longer be used for personal use excluding the police sworn officer staff and the director of EJD. All other administrative vehicle use must be for conducting businesses on behalf of the city for travel to conferences, etc., and must be approved in advance of use by the city manager.

According to *XposeSeatPleasant.com*, Mayor Grant spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars for the 2019 State of the City address, which is supposed to be a General Assembly of residence to receive an annual report of both current and future activities for the city. The initial budget for the address was \$10,000. The administration solicited and hired public figures to commemorate on this address, paying them in excess of \$500 per person in addition to traveling and lodging costs. There were several commentators. As stated previously, this is no longer the case as the city manager issues the state of the city address informing residents of the financial condition of the city in addition to presenting an annual report at no additional expense to the city.

IV. **Illegal & Unethical Activities**

1. It is believed that some city officials with criminal backgrounds including financial crimes, sexual crimes and violent assault were allowed to be directly responsible for the management of millions of taxpayer dollars and equipment. For example, the former Director of Economic Development, which had the highest budget within the City, was allowed to use an alias, to conduct city business. This person has a history of financial and sexual crimes. Mayor Grant was alleged to be aware of such crimes, but still hired him, basing his decision on their personal prior history. This decision caused great harm to the integrity of the city because in September of 2018, the person holding that position went on Facebook making allegations of how harm would come to his family by Mayor Grant, if he, the Director of Economic Development, did not continue to embezzle money for him.

2. An elected council member was witnessed on more than one occasion in public, showing visible signs of being under the influence of illicit drugs.

V. Election Concerns

During the last city election, we believe some things happened that should not have and resulted in a compromise of the election. For instance, according to an Affidavit of Limited Contribution and Expenditures, filed with the State Board of Elections, for the periods of 2014 - 2019, Devin Antoine Martin, Chief of Police, Seat Pleasant Police, was serving as treasurer for campaign contributions and expenditures for Mayor Grant "People For A Better County-State Campaign". This information was not disclosed and presents the appearance of impropriety and conflict of interest.

Chief Martin was not employed by the City in 2014. There is no knowledge of management or the council that Chief Martin was serving in the capacity of treasurer for the Mayor during his tenure as the Chief.

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0"

Another example is that several election/campaign procedures were not followed in that, prior to any election, after voting machines were delivered, no individuals (especially candidates) were to be in the building where the machines were located. However, in the 2016 election, two candidates running for office along with the Mayor were observed going in and out of the building when they should not have been there.

VI. Fraudulent Activities

A United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant was received to purchase a police vehicle. Some of the money was used to purchase a 2013 Chevrolet 4-Dr Sedan that was redirected as a personal vehicle for Mayor Grant contrary to the terms of the grant apparently with the knowledge of the Chief Police.

Mayor Grant was suspected of using the city hall address as his personal business address to apply for grants to operate his personal nongovernment-related business and required certain city employees during work hours to assist with record keeping of the grants. The work done by the employee was paid for by the city even though the work was for a noncity-related function. We believe this was theft by fraud.

VII. Abusive Work Environment

Due to continued behavioral episodes involving the mayor, the former council voted in August 2014 to revoke the mayors' privilege to use office space in city hall (legislation later rescinded). It was cited that Mayor Grant created an unstable work environment marked by excessive firing. Additionally, critical management and other jobs have been lost. This is coupled with the fact that several city employees, i.e. The Director of Economic Development, City Administrator, Financial Advisor/Acting Treasurer, Administrative Assistant to the Director of Economic Development, Director of Public Works, Project Manager, and key personnel, have

either been fired or resigned in recent weeks due to interactions with the Mayor. These and other turnovers were never experienced to this degree until he became Chief Executive Officer. These

excessive firings and turnovers resulted in ineffective city services. Table 6 below contains estimates of the employee turnover.

Estimated Employee Turnover			
Item No.	Position Title	Number of Estimated Position Turnovers	Estimated Year of Turnover
1	City Administrator	3 times	2014,2016, 2020
2	Director of Economic Development	4 times	2018*,2019, 2020
3	Assistant to Economic Development Director	2 times	2017, 2019
4	Public Works Director	4 times	2016*, 2019,2020
5	Public Work Assistant (Transportation Officer)	2 times	2017, 2018
6	Treasurer	3 times	2017, 2018,
	Treasurer (contractor)	1 time	2019
7	Assistant Treasurer	1 time	2017
8	Police Lieutenant	1 time	2019
9	Police Detective	1 time	2019
10	Police Administrative Assistant	3 times	2014, 2018, 2019
11	Code Enforcement Officer	4 times	2016*, 2017, 2018
12	Laborer/Street Sweeper	1 time	2017
13	Mayor's Assistant	4 times	2017, 2018, 2019,2020
14	Administrative Assistant to Mayor	4 times	2017, 2018*, 2019
15	Events coordinator	1 time	2020
16	Project Manager	2 times	2019, 2020
Total Estimated Position Turnovers		41 times	
*Year with more than one turnover.			

Table. 6. The year employment ended is an approximated date, and some job titles may have changed or may differ from the exact position title. Also, there may be additional turnovers that are not included in the table.

There has been high turnover rate some of which can be attributed to a hostile working environment. The majority of staff turnovers were the result of staff insubordination, and the inability to complete tasks assigned. This inability is attributed to a lack of education and government management experience. The hiring and firing of personnel was previously the authority of the Chief Elected Official of the city, although termination letters were signed by the COO, it was at the direction of the CEO. This is no longer the case, as the city manger has hiring firing authority excluding the City clerk and the Police Chief which is with the approval of the city council.

VIII. Conclusion

It can clearly be seen that there are reasons to be concerned regarding the management and administration of the City of Seat Pleasant. Some of the issues were discussed with city officials to no avail. Some who have voiced their concern about some of the activities taking place in the city were either fired by the mayor and or council or resigned because they did not want to be a part of inappropriate activities. Since the mayor has been in office, there has been a number of things that have taken place that are not in the best interest of the residents of the city, for instance,

- The Safeway store which provided a vital service to the city was forced to move out because of the excessive property tax rate.

The closure of the Safeway store was a decision made by Safeway Headquarters and was not due to negligence on the part of the city. In fact, the city manager pointed out the discrepancies and myths surrounding the misinformation that the city did not do its due diligence to keep the store in the city.

The city manager proved that 12 Safeway and Giant grocery stores relocated out of Prince George's County over the prior two decades that were previously located within and outside municipal jurisdictions without at their own discretion.

The council has made significant revisions to the city charter limiting the authority and power structure of the mayor. Many previous decisions that were made when the mayor had full power and control as the Chief Elected Official have since been reversed.

- ~~Several mom~~ ~~Several mom~~ and pop stores have left the city or in the process of leaving the city also because of the high tax rate. Only one business closed.
- Little Caesar Pizza moved out of the city because of the higher tax rate imposed by the city officials. Little Caesar's closed due to concurrent robberies that occurred at the location.
- The Auto Zone parts store is either leaving or preparing to leave because of the high tax rate imposed by city officials.
- Planet Fitness is threatening to leave the city because of an excessive tax bill resulting from a higher personal property tax rate. They have been in or is entering into litigation regarding that tax bill.
- The Discount Mart is in a similar situation as Planet Fitness and is in dispute with the city over the excessive tax rate. The city and owner have agreed to a repayment plan.
- Most of the businesses in the city have been threatened or fined because the city wants them to install a new gate to protect their business from burglaries.

The personal property tax rate is extremely high, and it is detrimental to the welfare of the citizens of Seat Pleasant. This should be investigated as to why it is so high and what is happening to the funds that are received from it. All of these things that have happened in the city resulted in the loss of businesses and the potential loss of businesses to the detriment of the residents of Seat Pleasant.

Because of mismanagement, city officials do not have office space within the boundaries of the city and there has been no public notice to the residents of the current location of the office of the mayor and City Council. Accordingly, the citizens do not know where to go to take care of official city business. Likewise, trash and refuse collection interruptions have occurred as a result of city mismanagement. This is another misstatement. The CEO elected to relocate the staff outside of city boundaries during the pandemic when city hall was under construction.

In addition, travel expenses submitted by the mayor seems inappropriate and were made not in the best interest of the citizens of Seat Pleasant. A hostile work environment has resulted and a devastating employee turnover which illustrates that the city residents are not receiving the expected services required. This type of management mirrors the modus operandi of our nation's poor leadership and it is not good for our city.

We are quickly approaching a new election in the City of Seat Pleasant. The people, as a hold, are not aware of what is currently going on. If something is not done soon, the same mismanagement machine will be re-elected into office and continue the mismanagement and possibly insolvency of the city.

Seat Pleasant Concerned Citizens Committee

Enclosure B

SEAT PLEASANT CONCERNED CITIZENS COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 4489, Capitol Heights, MD 20791-4489

John L. Walker, Sr. Spokesperson

[seatpleasantccc\(a\).gmail.com](mailto:seatpleasantccc(a).gmail.com)

Saturday, May 29, 2021

Aisha N. Braveboy
14735 Main Street
Suite M3403
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Dear State's Attorney Braveboy:

Please accept this letter from the Seat Pleasant Concerned Citizens Committee as a request under the Public Information Act for a copy and the release of the investigation and/or report done by the Powers Group regarding the misconduct of Mayor Eugene Grant of Seat Pleasant that should be made available to the tax paying residents of the city. More importantly, the Committee is asking that your office review this report for any possible finding of criminal activities, misappropriations, unethical behavior, violations of oath of office or any other illegalities by Mayor Grant. If any possible finding is not within your legal authority, please forward it to the appropriate agency.

Your response to the Citizens of Prince Georges County will be greatly anticipated.

Sincerely,

CU
00:11 4/ >7

Walker, Sr.
Spokesperson

